

Reflective Journal Sample 1.
Activity Log and Reflection Journal: XXX Science Center Internship

May 31st, 2007, 7:30 am -3:30 pm:

Attended my first morning boat trip to shadow instructors and become acquainted with bay voyage program.

Reflection:

The purpose of this first day was to familiarize myself with one of the programs (half day Bay voyage) offered at the Science Center to get a better sense of their mission and how they attempt to accomplish it. This first experience was also for me to get a feel for how I wanted to spend the rest of my time interning for XXX, whether it is gathering fish data on the boat or performing administrative duties in the office. I have learned a lot on this first boat trip. This being my first time on the boat, I went to all of the different stations (hydrology, fish, mud, and plankton) to listen to the instructors' lessons. All but some very basic information was new to me. On this first day the trawls yielded lots of interesting fish that I had no idea to exist in such abundance in our own San Francisco Bay. I had a chance to touch some bat rays and leopard sharks and handle native and invasive species of crab brought on the boat from XXX's own aquarium. I've always known that the bay was a beautiful thing worthy of our consideration and protection but this experience showed me, up-close and personally, why it is so important to educate people about our local marine life. I felt as delighted to see and feel these creatures as much as the kids on board with their ooh-ing, ahh-ing, and whoa!-ing. I decided that being on the boat was a great way to spend my time so having someone explain fish data collection to me on the next voyage would be my next task.

June 8th, 2007, 7:30 am - 4:30 pm:

Attended morning boat trip and shadowed a volunteer fish data collector for introduction to process of fish data collection.

Performed miscellaneous office duties.

Toured on-site aquarium, learned about different organisms kept and their purpose.

Given instruction on how to feed fish and helped remove algal growth from tanks.

Reflection:

James, the fish data collector I shadowed was very pleasant. I got to handle the fish that were trawled unlike the first time (only the instructors are trained and allowed to handle sharks and rays), mostly anchovies, gobies and shrimp. This experience allowed me to see how fragile organisms that lived in the Bay were. Anchovies were most temperamental and often threatened to die when taken out of the water for long or were disturbed too much. This display from these little fish made it clear that it doesn't take much to kill life and why environmental education is so important for our future generations since they are the ones who will determine our future. While eating lunch back at the office, I spoke with one of the ladies that work at XXX and she explained that while fish data continues to be collected by new recruits, volunteers to enter in the data into the computer were less numerous. Additionally, the data can be put to good use in research or as a guide in local habitat restoration efforts or for various other things but is a few years behind. I realized the importance of this long-term on-going (since the 70's) fish data collection and its possible applications and decided I wanted to be a part of the effort. Later in the day, I met Jesus, who maintained to aquariums. After he showed me around to the different tanks, we began

cleaning algae from the aquariums which was initially slightly repulsive but overall genuinely fun. This was my taste of the less glamorous side of keeping aquariums full of (for lack of a better term) super cool animals.

June 22nd, 2007, 8:30 am - 5:00 pm:

Attended first summer camp voyage.

Assisted Captain in navigating and operating vessel.

Introduced to summer camp counselors/staff.

Reflection:

Without a fish intern to help me, I was not confident enough to collect fish data alone. Instead, the captain taught me basics on how to drive the boat and showed me some of the navigation instruments. Our position in the Bay was placed on a map on the computer screen through satellite positioning. I was surprised to learn that most of the southern end of the San Francisco Bay is very shallow. With the exception of specific channels (detectable by sonar and perhaps satellites) and ports, much of the bay on this side is less than ten feet and in some places just a few feet or even less. I found this pretty amazing. During a conversation with Captain Jackson, I learned that much of the funding XXX receives is from corporations as well as foundations. I understand that non-profits depend on the generosity of donors but it seems silly to accept donations from those who work against their purposes. It makes me realize how difficult it is for non-profit organizations to operate solely on principle. Knowing that large sums of money donated to XXX are from corporations that are in business to hurt the people and the environment is undoubtedly a difficult thing to swallow, and it appears that some of the staff have strong feelings on the issue for obvious reasons. Considering all the things that must be paid for, one would be inclined to accept the offerings of others despite certain (perhaps glaring) details. It makes me think of the saying, "beggars can't be choosers," but is it true? It's a complicated issue, but in a case such as this, I'm inclined to say yes. I guess it just depends on how idealistic or practical one wants to be.

June 29th, 2007, 8:30 am – 4:30 pm:

Collected fish data during summer camp voyage.

Met with volunteer coordinator at the end of the day to work out job schedule and work agreement.

Reflection:

As I get to know the staff at XXX better, I feel more comfortable with working alongside them and as a result am enjoying my time spent there more and more. As I am still a beginner at identifying the fish we catch, I slowly continue to learn how to tell what is what with each voyage I participate in. I have also come realize the difficulties if being an instructor on board to a group of ten young children during these voyages and am very much relieved that I get most of the perks of being on the boat without any of the responsibilities and headaches. For this I am thankful. I have also come to appreciate their expertise in the area of identifying local marine animal species since the process for me has proven to be a slow one. Hopefully I will gain enough information throughout this internship to be able to excite others about the wonderful life living just under the surface of the waters in our own backyard, as well as to convey the importance of preserving the delicate balance of life in our bay. I'm glad that I've been given the opportunity to work collecting fish data on the boat. I know that it's open to all competent volunteers who are willing to dedicate their time but I

feel it's still quite a privilege to be doing all the things that I do: having fun, meeting new people, handling interesting fish, learning new things and cruising on the bay.

July 6th, 2007, 8:30 am – 5:00 pm:

Participated in fish data collection during summer camp daily voyage.

Prepared mailings for individual donations.

Reflection:

Needless to say, after spending long stretches of time preparing mailing after mailing after mailing... the job gets ever so slightly tedious. I guess, at the very least, it gives me something to do. I'm sure it's not the favorite job of most volunteers but it is a necessary job, nonetheless, that serves an important purpose. This is the first year that the Science Center has decided to send out mailings to individual donors for contributions. We receive funding in a variety of ways; from schools paying at least in part for the programs (as they are expensive) they sign up for, from corporations, foundations, and the government. As a non-profit, the organization relies on these contributions in order to continue operating and individual donations are a source that never been previously tapped. Janeen, one of the XXX staff, said to think about it as an investment: a contribution to the Science Center is investing in environmental education and our future. This is a much more positive spin on something that others (who probably don't like the idea of parting with their dollars) might call begging for money. I think a diversity of methods to generate funds is a good idea like a diverse portfolio when investing. Relying on a single source of income makes a person (or in this case, the organization) very vulnerable should that source fail or falter. Having donations as a back up would help in case foundations and corporations decide to be less generous in a given year.

July 13th, 2007, 8:30 am – 5:00 pm:

Created current contact list of instructors, volunteers, and counselors using Excel spreadsheet.

Researched upcoming local teachers conferences.

Prepared donation mailings.

Reflection:

I especially enjoy working with one of the ladies there named Janine who provides me with a wealth of information about the organization. I find it all very interesting and hearing about the current events and current projects and it makes me eager to become more involved. I know I'm just the new intern that's there only once a week, but I would really enjoy something that's a little more challenging with a bit more responsibility and human interaction. I am not suggesting, however, that the more mundane office jobs like the ones I frequently do, for instance preparing mailings, are not important because they certainly are. But one thing I have recently realized about myself as a member of the workplace is that I want to do something that is equal to who I am (if that makes sense). I was thinking that I could do something related to their future plans and goals, like their plans to move to a new location with an adequate harbor and permanent building. I also know that it would be difficult for them to work with my schedule as I am only a volunteer that at this time can only dedicate one day a week. Some people still don't know or remember my name or why I'm there... I guess that's probably one of the biggest problems to overcome at this time. But I know that I want to do something that can serve as an outlet for my creative energies and that will utilize my strengths. Data entry, as important as it is, is not very stimulating for me. But

I guess that can probably be said for most people and maybe that doesn't mean very much or say very much about myself. It seems that I still have quite a bit of searching and learning to do before I can get a better idea of what I would consider to be the ideal job for me.

July 20th, 2007, 9:00 am – 5:00 pm:

Collected fish data during summer camp daily voyage.

Reflection:

I am slowly beginning to be able to identify the different animals we catch in our trawls without too much help, though I'm still not familiar with identifying some of the less common fish we occasionally pull up and continue to have trouble differentiating between the flat fish (turbot, halibut, sole, flounder, they all look so similar!). But I am confident that one day I will no longer need assistance in identifying the majority of the fish we'll catch on the boat. This is the first boat trip where I have seen trash along with the usual catch in the net. It was sad to see that a dead surfperch was found dead alongside the piece of plastic bag. There is a possibility that the surfperch was killed during the trawl but it is an uncommon occurrence from what I have seen. Despite the unfortunate loss, I think this sight was important to see. Seeing fish killed by trash and pollution is a very different thing than simply hearing about it. It becomes real and the loss of life is clearly visible. I hope that the kids who saw the instructor pulling the contents out of the net were affected in a way that might cause them to think about the things they do and perhaps change some behaviors for the better that might otherwise be environmentally damaging. I hope, as I am sure it is also the hope of those who work towards XXX's goals, the things kids experience on the boat, both good (like touching sharks and rays) and bad (seeing fish die as a result of human-caused pollution), will make lasting impressions that will guide them to make decisions that are environmentally responsible now and in the future.

July 27th, 2007, 10:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Assisted aquarist in removing dead fish from aquariums.

Collected fish data on afternoon voyage.

Reflection:

This is the first time I've collected fish data alone. I was a bit nervous that I would be a bit clumsy and not be able to identify some of the fish but once I got started doing my job, I realized that there was nothing for me to worry about. It was actually pretty enjoyable experience and I quickly realized that I am perfectly capable of doing a good job of collecting the fish data without help. It gives me reason to be a little more confident in myself as confidence is often something I sorely lack. So much of this internship has been as much of a learning experience about the organization as much as it has been a learning experience about myself. I really appreciate that doing an internship is a requirement for graduation because the experience offers so much more to students than just learning about what it's like to work for an environmental organization.

On this particular voyage, the group that we had on the boat was a little older (approximately high school aged girls) than the average school group we normally have (kids at around 10 years). As far as I was able to gather, these girls were a part of some sort of summer camp or program at Stanford designed to expose young women to a variety of different activities. I find it wonderful and satisfying to see that even at this age people still have such genuine interest and curiosity in seeing and touching marine animals. The opportunity to touch and be close to the animals makes the experience unique and memorable and I believe that this is

what brings the Science Center so much closer to achieving their goal of “inspiring respect and stewardship for the marine environment through experiential learning.”

August 3rd, 2007, 10:00 am – 5:00 pm:
Collected fish data on afternoon Discovery Voyage.

Reflection:

This was the second voyage where I collected the data alone. According to the calendar, there were supposed to be two others who would be there to measure and count the fish. I was a bit worried at first, but I quickly proved not to be a problem at all. In many ways, the job is easier done alone, since I wasn't bumping into other people and didn't need to check their progress or keep asking them things to keep up to make sure we were all on the same page. This was a good as well as an important (at least I think so) experience for me to prove to myself that I am a person perfectly capable of performing tasks like this without the aid of others. This is important as confidence in myself is something I often lack. Another, although separate and unrelated, thing I learned during this trip was that it's sometimes important for back up fish data collectors to be available to go on the voyages. Two fish data collectors is usually the limit per voyage or else it can get too confusing, inefficient and crowded when it comes our turn to do our job. There were already two people scheduled for this particular afternoon but neither showed up so it accidentally became a good thing that I chose to be the third wheel. Apparently it's fairly important that someone is able to perform fish data collection on every voyage for continuity of this ongoing research as well as for other a variety of other reasons that I do not yet fully understand.

August 10th, 2007, 9:00 am – 5:00 pm:
Worked with another volunteer to learn how to enter fish data into Microsoft Access.
Entered in past fish data collected by volunteers (like me) during discovery voyages.
Was lucky enough to be able to attend a short presentation/talk given by environmental scientist Dr. Andrew Cohen of the San Francisco Estuary Institute on the affects of invasive species on ecosystems and specifically in the San Francisco estuary.

Reflection:

For a while I somewhat dreaded learning how to input fish data into the database for fear that once I understand how to do it, it would automatically become the job that I will spend all of my time doing while I at XXX. Surprisingly, however, the work is not at all terrible. I feel it's a bit addicting even, although I'm not entirely sure why. Maybe it's the satisfaction of having entered yet another piece of paper's worth of data points and knowing that I am helping XXX become that much closer to approaching its goal of having up to date information on the different fish species, sizes and populations in our bay. I estimate that in a days worth of work, I can enter about a month or more worth of fish data and we are as of now working on March of 2004. I know I'll feel quite accomplished once I reach this current year and even more so once we're up to the same month. I remember how some of the staff complained in the past about the data being so behind that it can't be useful to others who might like to have this kind of information for projects like habitat restoration around the bay and think how great it would be if I dedicated myself to the task and bring things up to speed. I remember thinking that I wanted to be that person and, now, I am. I already have two months worth of entries under my belt and this is only my first day. I feel pretty good about

being able to help XXX make progress in this area. This is essentially all I want out of this internship: to be, at the very least, useful at something I'll also enjoy.

August 17th, 2007, 10:00am – 5:00 pm:

Entered fish data into computer database.

Helped sort, label and move files for storage.

Worked on XXX Myspace page in preparation for viewing by members of the organization as well as general public.

Reflection:

I am slowly but surely making progress in entering the information on those backlogged fish data sheets. There was a grant that XXX applied for a little while ago that was, well, not granted. I heard that the plans for the grant money, among other things, were to purchase hand held computer-like devices (iphones, to be exact) to use on the boat as the fish data is being collected and recorded and then plugged into the computer back at headquarters to upload the information. I think this was a good idea, although I'm not sure how necessary a brand new fancy iphone would be when other simpler, cheaper devices exist that could do the job just as well. As I was entering in the data, I kept thinking about how I might be able to modify the current data sheets that we have fish volunteers fill out so that they make entering in the data more efficient. The way the forms are set up now, the data collected and recorded on the boat is somewhat different from what is actually entered into the database. Hopefully, when the fall discovery voyages pick up again in September, I will have created a new data sheet for myself that will make the jobs of those entering fish data into the computer (which I am also one) much easier.

After lunch I was asked to help out the bookkeeper empty out one of her file cabinets and box up the papers to be stored. While working, she mentioned to one of her coworkers how great it was to have volunteers around and how she was so glad that I, instead of she, was doing that annoying job. Perhaps it was her own strange way of making me feel needed, but I was getting rather annoyed at her comments. Generally, I'm not easily bothered and am eager to help when people ask for it, but my impression of how she essentially felt about me as a volunteer was that all I'm good for is doing the jobs that she loathes and would otherwise have to suffer through herself. She was a nice lady but I really was less than pleased with her view of what volunteers are good for. I would like to avoid having to do any more slave work for her if I can.